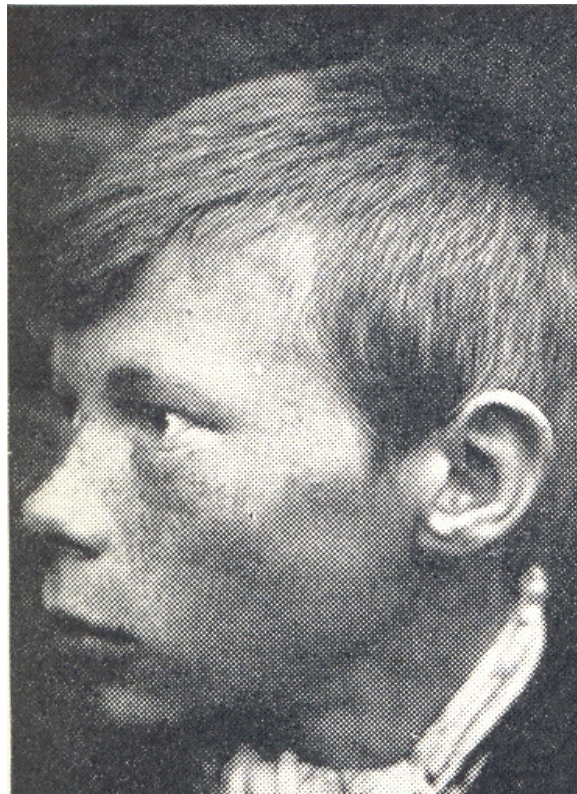


# **“The Lapps of the Jardin d’Acclimatation”**

**by Doctor Arthur Bordier**

ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIETY OF PARIS  
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**Robert K. Stevenson: Translator and Editor**



Norwegian Lapp

## “The Lapps of the Jardin d’Acclimatation”

Messieurs, after receiving a kind invitation recently from Monsieur Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, Director of the Jardin d’Acclimatation, I indulged myself by visiting the Jardin so that I could examine the nine individuals newly arrived from Lapland.

Seven are natives of Kautokeino; they are Gaupa, his wife, his unmarried sons and niece (Sara), along with his brother and sister; the two others, Porsanger and Anti, are natives of Karasjok.

These individuals are not the same ones as those who not long ago were on display in London, and about whom our colleague Monsieur Mazard has provided interesting details to the Society.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the Lapps shown in London came from the same place—that is, from Kautokeino. While I’m at it, I must rectify a quite substantial geographical error that our colleague has furnished the *Bulletins*. Kautokeino is not, as Monsieur Mazard has contended, at 90 degrees latitude nor is it situated on the Muonio River, which separates Sweden from Russia; rather, its specific location is 68 degrees latitude, 41 degrees longitude, and it adjoins the Alteelva River, which flows into the Arctic Ocean, and not into the Gulf of Bothnia, like the Muonio. Karasjok sits at 69½ degrees latitude and 43 degrees longitude. These two places are therefore in Finmark in northern Norway, and are not in Sweden.

These Lapps, which the Society’s investigative commission will examine later on, are short; all have light skin and are blonds; only one is brown-haired.

What therefore is the characteristic shade of the Lapp type? What as well is the proper shade of the Finnish type?

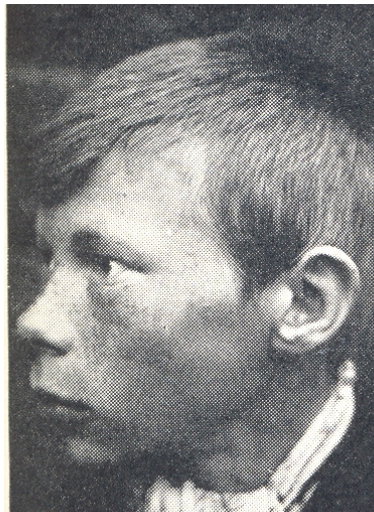
Linnaeus, who observed them, stated that the Lapps are *corpore parvo, capillis nigris, brevibus, rectis*, and that on the contrary the Finns are *corpore toroso, capillus flavis, prolixis, oculorum iridibus, fuscis*. Van Duben, for his own part, described them as most frequently being brown-haired, although, he noted, one still sees among them blonds and redheads. Lastly, a Norwegian proverb, which has been reported to us by the interpreter, Monsieur Jacobs, says: “*Dark as a Lapp.*”

But Monsieur Jacobs himself has pointed out that most of the Norwegian Lapps are blonds; that the number of brunets increases among the Swedish Lapps, while in the Russian Lapps the brunets predominate.

Van Duben primarily observed Swedish Lapps; the ones that we behold at this moment in Paris are Norwegians. We should therefore be aware of the difference which necessarily arises from these two descriptions. But, on the whole this difference, strangely enough, appears the more the Lapps are removed from Finland where the Finnish type dominates. All are, like those Van Duben wrote about, brachycephalic and orthognathous.

The head of a Lapp is typically large. For example, I am informed that Doctor Bertillon measured the capacity of five Lapp skulls belonging to the Museum of the Anthropology Society, and found them to average 1492 cubic centimeters. These skulls, it is true, as our colleague believes, are choice specimens. The cheekbones in Lapps are prominent. In a young girl the eyes are very oblique, a characteristic previously noted by Vanderkindere. In nearly all, the face, thin at its base, surmounts an extremely small lower jaw—a quality which seems to have been manifested in the Lapp skulls that were on display for several days at the anthropological sciences section of the Universal Exposition.

Doctor Bertillon, in measuring 5 skulls and 3 skull casts, found the cephalic index to average 85.6. Van Duben indicates it as being 83.5. With the only one that I have so far been able to measure, and it was taken by chance, the index was 88.63. According to Doctor Hamy, the average cephalic index of Lapp skulls belonging to the collections of Scandinavian museums is 84.93.



This 18-year-old Norwegian Lapp boy possesses all the most characteristic Lappish facial features, such as prominent cheekbones, and a face that's thin at its base which surmounts an extremely small lower jaw.

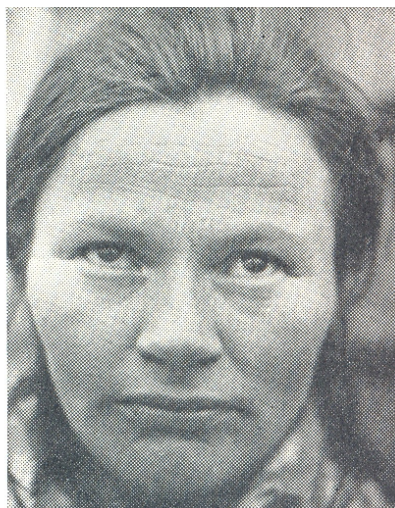
The skin of Lapps is light-colored, the eyes blue or reddish brown, and the facile profile appears orthognathous. Doctor Topinard ascertained a very small degree of prognathism on Lapp skulls, of 18.60 only, that is to say, an amount between that of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century French Basques (18.66) and modern Spaniards (18.46).

Finally, from however many points of view the Lapps seem to us to resemble the inhabitants of France during the Age of the Reindeer, it must be admitted that craniology does not provide us any reason to suppose that the resemblance extends to the ethnic type itself.

Based on the information that I have received up to now from Monsieur Jacobs, it turns out that the longevity of the Lapps is great. Men who exceed 80 years of age are not rare.

All the ones presently at the Jardin d'Acclimatation appear cheerful and openhearted. Additionally, it is easy to convince oneself that the classification of human races by music, proposed some time ago to the Society by Monsieur Fetis, does quite an injustice to the Lapps due to its pretense that they are the only people who do not sing, for, in fact, all of them dance and sing in a bass voice.

The Lapps are nomads; indeed, they are also the only people in Europe, along with the gypsies, who are presently nomads.



Norwegian Lapp woman. The incipiently Mongoloid features (note the oblique eyes) found in some Lapps are usually more pronounced in the women than in the men.

Everybody knows that the absolutely essential element of their existence is the reindeer, which provides them their food and clothing, and which, being even more useful than the seal is for Eskimos, they employ as a carriage animal and as a beast of burden. These reindeer live in half-free herds, under the surveillance of dogs who call to mind those of the Eskimos, and it is with a lasso that the owner goes into the herd to select the one which he needs to harness, milk, or butcher. The indispensable nourishment for these animals is lichen (*ceromyce rangiterina*), which our Lapps at the Jardin have brought with them. The vehicle they use for transportation is a light sled shaped like a nacelle, very different and much swifter than the kind used by Eskimos; moreover, and it is quite in keeping with their nomadic character, their baggage is even more simple than that of the Eskimos.

Their poorly-enclosed conical huts, completely open (unlikely as it may seem) at the top in order to allow smoke from the fireside to escape, are generally constructed by means of long pieces of wood brought together in bundles which are then covered with a material made out of the hair of some sort of otter. That which might be considered as the roofing is a layer of birch bark.

It is this birch bark once again which, when soaked in fish oil, serves as a torch to provide light and as fuel to warm oneself. The birch bark is also fashioned into very light sacks that are worn on the back, sacks identical to the ones our tourists in the Jardin have brought with them.

Lastly, an ingenious filter of coarse animal hair is used to strain the reindeer milk.

The mode of dress of the Lapp men and women little differ and is composed of reindeer fur and thick shoes, or boots made out of reindeer hide. The headwear of the men consists of a sort of square cap, which to the eye somewhat resembles the cap worn by Polish lancers. The women's headwear is what we would call amongst ourselves a "fool's cap," minus the small bells.

But what appears particularly interesting are the different tools that each one carries suspended from his belt: one is a spoon made out of reindeer bone and another a knife whose handle is composed of the same substance, and whose blade is iron; additionally, a series of small objects—a thimble, box of needles, tinder-box, etc., made from reindeer bone—is attached by means of a leather cord tied to a bronze buckle. This ensemble of useful items completely reminds one of the collection of similar handy tools made from steel that over the years we have developed and which are designed to be attached to one's belt by means of a chatelaine.

But two things are most striking at first sight: the first is the analogy between the present-day decorations appearing on all these objects of bone with the designs found on Bronze Age vases, and secondly the identical nature of the buckle's form, which depicts a wheel with its spokes, to buckles dating from the Bronze Age. It is therefore very likely the Scandinavian influence from the Bronze Age, and not the prehistoric art of the Age of the Reindeer, that has produced amongst the Lapps the effects which we see.

A flint strike-a-light, slung over the shoulders, completes the accouterment.

## DISCUSSION

*Doctor GUSTAVE LE BON.* With respect to the size of the skull of the Lapps, it must be noted that 150 skulls of Finnish origin, exhibited at the Trocadero, measured an average of 1605 cubic centimeters. But one of them was 2020 cubic centimeters. This is such an enormous size that I do not believe it ought to have been counted in establishing the average, because this skull seems to me to constitute an anomaly.

It is true that at the end of the brochure describing this exhibit it is stated that all these skulls came from the heads of criminals who had been executed. One might therefore wonder if the enormous volume of these skulls originates from the fact that they are Finns or rather because they are scoundrels. Without pretending to draw any general conclusion, I must point out that the volume of the skulls of murderers housed at the Caen Museum is very considerable.

*Doctor ERNEST HAMY.* You alluded, Doctor Bordier, to the research that I conducted in 1874 on Lapp skulls conserved in Scandinavian museums. By comparing my observations taken in Sweden and Norway with those from the Society's Museum, I have compiled a series of measurements that are quite numerous and which offer the unique feature of being sorted by Lapp tribes. Moreover, I have measured many skulls of Lapps belonging to the same tribe as those who are now at the Jardin d'Acclimatation, and have shared these measurements with you.

As for the similarities you noted, Doctor Bordier, that exist between the Lapps and some European types, I shall permit myself to refer to the work that I have published in collaboration with Professor de Quatrefages. In this work you will see, for example, that the Grenelle series falls between ones belonging to two different Lapp tribes.

**Doctor JACQUES BERTILLON, Sr.** Doctor Bordier has told us that the tendency to live long is quite remarkable in Lapland. It follows from Russian records and others that, in general, the less a country is civilized, the more numerous are its centenarians, though its mortality rate will be greater. It seems that between these two elements there exists an antinomic connection.

But all these countries have this one thing in common: that, whenever it even exists, the civil state is very weakly maintained. Further, just as women have a tendency to understate their age, old men love to overstate their age; in a country where there is no well-formed civil state, this is easy to get away with. It is in this manner that the Bible also provides us accounts of cases of miraculous longevity among a little-civilized people.

Aside from this explanation, one might invoke physiology to explain the Lapps' longevity. It can be said to originate from the selection that death makes among young children in a people where the mortality rate at an early age is always very great. Those children that death spares necessarily possess an extremely vigorous constitution that is capable of triumphing over all the perils of existence.

**Doctor JULES LUNIER.** I agree with you, Doctor Bertillon, but with this difference: I believe less in the lack of civilization upon influencing the frequency of centenarians than that of a rigorous climate.

**Doctor JACQUES BERTILLON, Sr.** In Greenland, though, old age is arrived at extremely early.

## FOOTNOTE

1. *Bulletins de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, 1878, p. 642.